

Helping ex-offenders reintegrate

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Women of the Bible

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NIAGARA ANGLICAN



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A section of the Anglican Journal

MARCH 2017

Celebration and sadness mark final service

BILL MOUS

"This church building has been a home, a refuge and a place filled with great joy in the midst of countless celebrations," said Bishop Michael Bird during the final service at St. James Merritton (St Catharines). "It has also been for us a sanctuary in the face of so many difficult and painful moments and tragedies."

The building was deconsecrated—returned to common use—at a special afternoon service on Sunday, January 22.

Long-time parishioner Sandra Thomson remarked it was "a chance to have one more look, one more chance to be the Crucifer, one more chance to be a part of an awesome place to have worshipped and hopefully, a final chance to see people who were a part of St. James."

In many ways Sunday's service was the culmination of a grieving process for the parish. "We spent the last few months after the vestry vote [which approved the parish's disestablishment] to remain in community and remember," said the Reverend Pamela Guyatt, St. James' last rector. "The service on Sunday was about saying goodbye to the place."

In his homily, the Bishop echoed a sentiment from our funeral liturgy. He noted the first reading from Romans chapter eight, which boldly proclaims that nothing can separate us from the love of God, is often read in the context of a funeral service. He reminded those gathered that they "worship the God who walks with us," and "offers us the healing, comfort and hope



▲ St. James Merritton (St. Catharines) has stood at the same place since 1892.

Photo: Pamela Guyatt

that allows us to carry on."

The decision by the parish to conclude its ministry in Merritton comes on the heels of a two year discernment process with its 10 neighbouring Anglican congregations in the greater St. Catharines area.

Led by Canon Christyn Perkons, director of congregational support and development, the process sought to revitalize an Anglican presence in the area to better respond to God's call.

"Things have changed dramatically in the 125 years that this building has stood on this site," observed Bishop Michael. It was these changes that ultimately led the people of

St. James to the realization they could better contribute to the common ministry of the diocese by strengthening their neighbouring parishes. In making this difficult decision, he said, the parish offered "us all a glimpse of what it means to continue to live faithfully."

"It is staggering to think about all the prayers that have been offered in this church building since 1892," the Bishop continued, "and all the many acts of ministry that this congregation of St. James has engaged in, to touch the lives of the people who have entered these doors in one form or another."

When asked about the parish's



Top: Rev. Pamela Guyatt proclaimed the gospel during the final service at St. James. Bottom: Bishop Michael greeted parishioners during the recession. Photo: Bill Mous



legacy, Pamela Guyatt said that it "cannot be measured, because there is no way to hear all the stories."

The last regular worship service at St. James Merritton occurred at the end of 2016, on New Year's Eve, the same day as the parish was formally disestablished.

Since that time neighbouring parishes "have been extremely welcoming and have bent over backwards to help," observed Sandra Thomson.

Pamela is providing ongoing pastoral support through her new role as transition pastor at the Church of the Transfiguration where most for-

mer St. James parishioners have moved. In addition, she will also be developing new programs to sustain and enhance the ministry already happening at Transfiguration to better serve southern St. Catharines.

No decisions have been made about the future of the property now that it has been returned to common use. This decision will be made by the Synod Council of Niagara Diocese.

The Reverend Bill Mous is Director of Justice, Community and Global Ministries and Communications Coordinator for Niagara Diocese. bill.mous@niagaraanglican.ca

Book review

It's a natural

A Natural History Of Natural Theology
 Helen De Cruz & Johan De Smedt.
 2015, The MIT Press



ROB ROI

Traditionally, natural theology is the term used for the attempt to prove the existence of God and divine purpose through observation of nature and the use of human reason.

Why is religion culturally universal? Why do our senses of order, design and beauty lead us to infer a Designer?

Helen and Johan clearly and logically join philosophy with cognitive science to provide accessible, practical answers.

This book contains an in-depth examination of the cognitive basis of natural theological arguments for the existence of God: the argument from design, the cosmological argument, the moral argument, the argument from beauty and the argument from miracles.

Using historical and contemporary versions of these arguments as they are developed by theologians, the authors go a step further: what happens to theology when the science in question is the science of theological thought itself?

In the final chapter—Natural History of Religion and the Rationality of Religious Beliefs—they state, “Some religious beliefs are properly basic, they derive their warrant from the view that God designed the human mind in such a way that it spontaneously forms these beliefs under a wide range of circumstances.”

Helen De Cruz is assistant Professor at the VU University in Amsterdam. John De Smedt is a postdoctoral fellow at Ghent University.

The Reverend Rob Roi is a parish deacon at St. James' Dundas. margro1@sympatico.ca

Helping ex-offenders reintegrate

TED MERCER AND JOAN MACNEIL



“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

Reintegrating ex-offenders is challenging, but fundamental for a more inclusive, safer community. “Get tough on crime” approaches are counterproductive; long sentences actually make it more likely that ex-offenders will re-offend. Providing reintegration support is more effective and less costly.

The Bridge from Prison to Community—founded by Christians of diverse denominations in 1988—provides services facilitating social reintegration of men post-incarceration in Hamilton and Halton County.

It provides transitional housing and practical and emotional support: in-house programs, referrals, group meetings and one-on-one coaching to improve life skills and access to training, education, housing and work opportunities. It also facilitates a family support group.

Tom came to The Bridge with “baggage”, unfortunately common among ex-offenders:

“I was born addicted to drugs, into a violent home with an alcoholic mom. I became a crown ward at four. Twenty-five foster homes and two group homes before I struck off on my own at 15. McDonald's work didn't cover the bills. I stole to survive, was jailed 20–25 times. The Bridge has been a shoulder to lean on—or cry on—and a place to vent. I haven't offended since 2011, work most of the time. I'm doing alright.”

George had a loving family, but alcoholism led to DUI convictions and jail.

“In December 2011 I emerged with just the shirt on my back. I lived at Bridge House for two months. Although I now live on my own, I still attend several support meetings a week. I've been seeing my seven-year-old regularly, a real joy. Bridge staff recently helped me redo my résumé, and I'm starting a new job. The Bridge has been fundamental.”

Jack moved into The Bridge in



▲ A Bridge staffer and an ex-offender enjoy a game of chess. Ex-offenders often find Friday and Saturday evenings lonely, as they try to avoid activities and people that trigger substance abuse and/or re-offending.
 ▼ Bridge staff, volunteers and ex-offenders sharing a holiday meal with a visitor, Hamilton City Councillor Matthew Green (bottom left corner).

Photos: The Bridge



summer 2016:

“The Bridge was a breath of fresh air ... I was treated as a human being and not looked down on because I had a record ... In jail I was constantly reminded I was 'less than'. The Bridge has been a stepping stone to help me reach my goals. I'm now studying at Mohawk College in the Business and Finance program.”

Hundreds of our region's ex-offenders finish sentences and are released, most without any support, every month. The Bridge's part-time occupational therapist Stephanie sees about 120 ex-offenders a month and helps them navigate their way to reintegration. She notes, “Successes are possible, but we've got to increase the scope of our work, so more ex-offenders can turn their lives around.”

How you can help ...

- **Donate today—your donation is tax deductible.** We are grateful for support from Niagara Diocese and other groups, but we urgently need more. With your support, we can teach ex-offenders how to find and keep stable housing, search for work effectively, survive on a shoestring, get treatment for mental health problems and avoid re-offending. A dollar a day can make a huge difference.

- **Help us find housing for ex-offenders.** If you or friends have a room or an apartment to rent, contact us.
- **Help us find work for ex-offenders.** Employers have been pleased with our “alumni.” Connect us to employers who might be receptive.
- **Volunteer with the Bridge.** Are you a friendly practical person? Can you spare a few hours monthly? If so, we need you.
- **Talk with MPs, MPPs and Municipal Councillors.** Urge them to increase support for reintegration services.
- **Attend the Restorative Justice Conference.** Saturday, April 1, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Christ's Church Cathedral, 252 James Street N., Hamilton.

To donate (canadahelps.org/en/charities/the-bridge-hamilton), volunteer or get more information, contact us at 905-522-0283, hamilton-bridge.ca or info@hamilton-bridge.ca

Ted Mercer is a Board member of The Bridge from Prison to Community. Joan MacNeil is a Community Advisor to The Bridge.

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HOLLIStorial

The hand as a sacrament

HOLLIS HISCOCK

The hand inhabiting 25% of the left quadrant of my television screen on January 20th, 2017 captured my attention, like a wee nail drawn to a gigantic magnet.

It was an eerie emotional fixation. I felt like the three guests stopped by the Ancient Mariner (poem by Samuel Coleridge, 1834), held by a "skinny hand."

The raised hand - witnessed around the globe - pledged to uphold a country's constitution. As his other hand rested on a family Bible, he repeated traditional vows sealing the triangular covenant involving the individual, the people and the nation.

Instantaneously, I experienced an epiphany, "a sudden perception of the essential meaning of something" (Merriam-Webster).

I was contemplating the sacramental nature and meaning of hands, and how hands are employed in secular and sacred ceremonies. It brought to memory what I had learned ad nauseam before my teenage years, as I prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation (the



The sacrament of hands came alive in St. Catharines when hand held candles were carried by a large crowd from all parts of Niagara. With prayers, speeches and movement, they walked from St. Catharines City Hall to Masjid An-Noor (the mosque of Light) to show solidarity and sympathy following the massacre in Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre in January.

Photo: Bill Mous

Laying on of Hands).

"A sacrament is an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace."

When the bishop laid his hands on my head and repeated certain words, I became the recipient of God's grace. Perhaps I did not fully comprehend the significance at that moment, but it would become more transparent and integrated as I aged and matured.

Conversely, by kneeling and

pledging, I was promising or covenanting with God, God's people and God's world that I would uphold God's "constitution" and model it throughout my life.

A sacrament has several purposes. It bestows grace, authority or power upon the person, who in response accepts and internalizes these gifts and returns them in service for the wellbeing of everybody.

On the following day, January 21, I observed another sacramen-

tal involvement—the Women's March—a world-wide phenomenon in support of women's rights and other causes.

Once again hands were the outward visible sign, but this time carrying signs. The verbal commitment was replaced by written messages of equality, inclusiveness, justice and human rights, and were made, not by holding holy books, but by holding placards.

My thoughts travelled back 2,700 years to Micah. He too marched through his country's villages and cities with his sacramental challenge and call to action.

"What does God require of us?" he would ask his audience, and then answered unequivocally, "Do what is just, show constant love and walk with God."

Times have changed, but the needs are the same—equality, inclusiveness, justice and human rights for everybody.

Since time immemorial (or shortly thereafter) hands have played a sacramental role as humans interact.

Two people shake hands to finalize a business deal. The visible sign confirms the inner



commitment bringing to fruition what was hammered out in negotiations.

When bishops and priests place hands on the head of a candidate for ordination, it signals God's grace being bestowed upon that individual, who in return accepts what is being offered.

Moses stretched out his hand and divided the Red Sea, so God's people could escape from the slave pens of Egypt, walk on the dry ocean floor and find freedom.

Possibly, the most poignant example of the hand as a sacrament occurred when nails were driven through Jesus' hands on the cross. The outward sign was rather horrific, but its inward spiritual grace was an expression of God's ever present love and mercy.

In worship, we share God's peace by shaking hands – another sacramental act as we bestow this sacred gift to help each other cope with life's challenges and celebrations.

The sacrament of hands is a two way thoroughfare - an outward visible sign and an inward spiritual grace.

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Add a photo or drawing to spice things up.

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Unique features at deacon's ordination

HOLLIS HISCOCK

Nine relatives and friends, sitting in a house in Ireland, watched as Janice Mary Maloney-Brooks was being ordained a deacon in Christ's

Church Cathedral in Hamilton, Canada, over 5,000 kilometres away.

Perhaps this was the first live streaming of such an occasion.

Another unique feature was Janice's deacon stole, knit by

many people representing the various communities where she studies, lives and works.

In the ordination bulletin Canon Christyn Perkons described the meaning of Janice's stole (see

below).

Janice continues her diaconal ministry at the Church of the Ascension and with the Seafarers Mission, both in Hamilton.



Photo: Tara Madison



Thanks to internet streaming, people in Ireland were able to see and participate instantly as Janice was being ordained in Canada.

Photo: Hollis Hiscock



Bishop Terry Brown from the Church of the Ascension Hamilton and Niagara Bishop Michael Bird place their hands on Janice's head to ordain her a deacon in God's church.

Photo: Hollis Hiscock

The deacon stole – a labour of love

CHRISTYN PERKONS

Janice's stole is a labour of love, worked on by many of the people who have walked with her in her faith and vocational journey. These include her family and the son of a godchild in Ireland, fellow students and professors from Trinity College, parishioners from Church of the Ascension, seafarers from the Mission to Seafarers, colleagues, friends, diocesan staff and other companions on her discernment pilgrimage.

They've each knit a couple of rows and infused them with love, care, prayers and good wishes.

Some of the rows have the tension and uniformity characteristic of lifelong knitters, while other rows carry the holes and bumps created by first-time knitters. A couple of rows even contain intentional holes created by the seafarers who only knew how to crochet fishing nets!

Janice's friend, Sue Hawthorne-Bate, crocheted the Celtic knots in the shape of a cross that will fall across Janice's heart, as well as the panels on each end of the stole.

The wool in the stole, both the oxblood and the bright red, was grown, sheared and spun on Iona (a small island

off the western coast of Scotland and a centre for Gaelic monasticism for four centuries). Janice purchased the wool while on a pilgrimage to the Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian community engaged with people across the world in acting, reflecting and praying for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

The genesis of this stole is Janice's love of community, her yearning to engage and connect and her desire to include her pilgrimage companions symbolically in one of the signs of her ministry.

One of the knitters, a complete novice, commented she felt that the act of knitting part of Janice's stole connected her, physically and spiritually, to all the people with whom Janice will intersect over the course of her ministry as a deacon.

What a fitting symbol this hand knit stole is of the yoke of Christ, of the commitment to faithful service and compassionate love of the people of God!

► Janice with her distinctive stole.

Photo: Hollis Hiscock



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Parishes recommend exciting ministry possibilities

"We're excited to report that all 11 participating St. Catharines area congregations have signified their commitment to new shared ministries, renewed faith formation, joint community engagement initiatives and a collaborative model for implementation of the recommendations and ensuing ministry," exclaimed Canon Martha Tatarnic, Rector of St. George's St. Catharines, at the December meeting of Synod Council, the governing body of Niagara Diocese.

The good news came from a delegation presenting the final report, including 17 recommendations, of the Greater St. Catharines Anglican Church Discernment Conversation.

Taken together, it represented the culmination of nearly two years work, fulfilling Bishop Michael's original mandate, to discern God's call to strengthen and support the Anglican Church in the St. Catharines area.

"This trailblazing work," continued Martha, "mirrors the City of St. Catharines own 'process of reimagining itself.'" There, downtown businesses are being revitalized and significant investment is happening in arts and culture, the university and



As part of the discernment process, a town hall meeting was held to garner affirmation of the report's direction and recommendations.

Photo: Niagara Diocese

regional transit, all of which carry important missional opportunities.

During the process, "participants discussed the health of their congregations, shared their programs and missional elements, learned about other forms of ministry and worship, and discussed underlying issues impacting each congregation's ability to be thriving, relevant and impactful." Canon Christyn Perkons, director of congregational support and development, facilitated the ground-breaking

work and will continue to support any new ministry initiatives, beginning with the establishment of an animation team.

Sandra Thomson from St. James Merrittton invited Synod Council members to open their minds to the possibilities. "Can you imagine what will come out of having a place where there is a focus on the larger community and cooperation across all parishes on common goals and missions?"

The possibilities deal with

staffing, faith formation and worship, social justice and outreach, children-youth and family ministry and church buildings. If fully implemented, ministry teams will be formed and opportunities for collaborative area-wide ministry seized. There may also be a reduction in the number of parishes. "This report charts a course for a Spirit-led renewal of our ministry in the St. Catharines area," Christyn observed.

To deepen parish relationships and effectively meet more needs, the report recommends three clusters of churches: One in the north (St. John Port Dalhousie, St. Columba, Christ Church and St. George's Homer), another in the city centre (St. George's, Grace, St. Thomas'

and St. Barnabas) and the third cluster in the south (St. James', Transfiguration and St. John the Evangelist Thorold).

Already some shared ministries are happening. In the south parishes shared summer services and a joint youth group exists in the centre. Some city-wide worship services have been held, as well as St. George's and Grace exploring ways of doing ministry as one.

There were no recommendations regarding the closing of any specific parishes, but each cluster is to "continue the process of relationship building and partnering to right-size our property footprint."

The presenters suggested the process used by the Greater St. Catharines parishes "can be a model to others across Canada and even across the communion in terms of re-imagining our church." Bishop Michael agreed, observing it may very well be unique in the Anglican Church of Canada.

Synod Council expressed "gratitude to the 11 parishes who worked for two years to discern new ways of undertaking ministry in their wider community." They also encouraged the Bishop to support the implementation of the proposed ministry initiatives.

Condensed from the diocesan website. Original article written by the Reverend Bill Mous. The full report is available at niagaraanglican.ca

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Women of the Bible

A daily Lenten devotion intended for individuals, couples and groups.



Image: *The Annunciation*, by Hugo van der Goes. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Public domain.

Some have names, others remain nameless and some may be parables. Such is the plight and treatment of women by those who penned books contained in the Bible.

In Lent 2017 we are meditating on both.

We will enter their eras, read about their situations, reflect on what our writers have observed, ask ourselves how their experiences resonate in our day and what needs to be done to make life better for ourselves and others who journey together on this planet.

- First, read the recommended Bible passage.
- Then, read the commentary from our writer.
- Thirdly, reflect on any questions posed or elicited.
- Fourthly, ask how the women's experiences apply to life today.
- Finally, decide what action you or others need to take.

We have included five devotions each week, leaving Saturday and Sunday for catch up on any meditations you missed during the week and to reflect how the Bible readings at Sunday worship fit into our theme—Women of the Bible. Feedback ... we appreciate your comments, suggestions or questions. Contact information is found on page 3.

Ash Wednesday, March 1 Pharisee's house Luke 7:36-50

The woman recognized the Pharisee's house as she turned the corner—she had never been welcome there.

She tucked her hand firmly around the alabaster jar, almost in reassurance that she still had the courage and faith to meet him there.

Entering, she immediately knelt behind Jesus, who was seated at the table.

She could no longer hold it together—the anticipation and excitement of being in his presence was broken by the truth. The truth was pain, healing and overwhelming love—the tears flowed.

As tears ran onto Jesus' feet she gently moved her head, back and forth, allowing her hair to dry them. She kissed his feet, and rubbed the ointment into his skin.

She felt separated from the high tension in the room. Then, he spoke.

Amazed that Jesus stood up for her in the Pharisee's house, she heard him say, "Your sins are forgiven."

She represents the experience and reality of many women, invisible in society and known for their sins.

But she, like us, can hear God's truth in Jesus' words of forgiveness.

Fran Wallace, Burlington.

Thursday, March 2 Deborah Genesis 35:1-8

Being a maternal/child nurse at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, my selection of a woman in the Bible would be Deborah No. 1, the woman who spent her life as a nursemaid.

Deborah means bee, emblematic of industry, patience, sagacity and usefulness.

"The God of grace enabled Deborah to live her life as a devoted, quiet and faithful nurse" and through her faith she "transformed her bonds of servitude into those of love, and earned the devotion and gratitude of those she had so long and

loyally served." (ref: biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Deborah-No-1)

For me, nursing is not only my profession, but my passion. "The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others" – Gandhi.

Judith Forward, Hamilton.

Friday, March 3 The Widow and the Unjust Judge Luke 18:1-8

Modern Conversation
Around the world, almost 3 million women and allies marched on January 21, 2017.

Almost 3 million people were upset enough to take to the streets, wear pink hats and demand that their voices be heard. In the following weeks, how many marched again?

"Once is not enough", we hear the voice of the persistent widow say.

"When you speak truth to power you must repeat yourself," echoes her voice.

"Real truth and real justice are not issues you can march for one time and then declare yourself done," I imagine her saying.

"Be persistent, that's the only way you will wear them down," she nags.

"Push and then push some more!" she continues.

"Push—you mean get physical?" I wonder. "No!" comes the exasperated reply.

"Push—pray until something happens! Be persistent, don't give up."

Sometimes we pray with our feet, sometimes we pray with loud voices, sometimes we pray in large groups, but however we pray, we must persist until something happens.

I reflect as I go back to knitting my pink hat.

Kathleen Cairnie-Sorensen, Toronto.

Monday, March 6 Martha Luke 10:38-42

This story, only in Luke, is told in a few puzzling and powerful verses.

The sibling rivalry between Mary and Martha intrigues us to take sides.

The good housekeeper cleans up after the devoted follower who anoints Jesus' feet with the family's best oil. Martha doesn't begrudge the oil—her sister enacts a profound ritual—but Mary could clean up! Instead Mary sits at the master's feet, listening, while Martha, standing with her "to do" list, ignores his message and feels cast down.

Jesus muses, "Few things are needed—indeed only one."

Martha remains unsatisfied with this great lesson Jesus gives her. One can almost hear Martha's defense. "If Mary helped, I too might have time to listen and think wise thoughts."

Perhaps Jesus says, "Thank you for opening your home to me. You have already done the one thing that I needed from you. Lazarus and Mary are tired. Now is your time to be with me."

Martha, addicted to her complaints, again ignores his gift of being with her! Truly Mary has chosen better.

Eleanor Johnson, Fenwick.

Tuesday, March 7 The Good Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

The microwave beeped. Warmed-over instant—she made it earlier, but Kylie spilled the cereal on the floor. Josh couldn't find something vital ("vital" grew legs and wandered off), the cat threw up and Max stepped in it ... a little sugar, little more ... were two "littles" still a little?

She sank gratefully into the old recliner.

The hand that brought her coffee to her lips was *not shaking*.

Her "to do" list waited primly beside her cup—three urgent things added from

the morning's jumbled communications.

Pick up Josh's kids from school, edit Lisa's presentation (she needed two more options for her committee—they should be really creative) and what was the other?

Something about beeswax ... did the cat need taking to the vet?

She was reading the first lesson on Sunday; maybe it would help settle her mind to go over it now. She flipped open her Bible: "A capable wife, who can find? She is far more precious than jewels ..." Yeah, right!

She closed her eyes, just for a moment.

Marianne Vespy, Westdale.

Wednesday, March 8 Lydia of Thyatira Acts 16:14, 15

What a pioneer Lydia is in her time! There is not a lot to go on from our scriptural reference, but Lydia seems to take very bold steps for a woman of her day. She is a believer and a businesswoman, which puts her in a special and unique class of women.

She deals in purple cloth, so she has many dealings with wealthy patrons.

She came with a group of women to hear Paul preach.

She has obviously been seeking something to make her life more complete and seems to find it in Paul's teaching.

She might be a widow, as her decisiveness tells me that she does not belong to a male-dominated household.

She is so overcome with the news of Jesus Christ—she has her whole household baptized.

She encourages Paul and his entourage to stay in her home. Surely this would be unheard of! Imagine her persuasive manner (perhaps something that has made her successful in business) as she prevailed upon Paul with her hospitality.

We need more Lydias in our churches!

Suzanne Craven, Burlington.

Thursday, March 9 Susannah

Daniel 13 (online or certain Bibles)

Unfortunately, not all versions of the Bible have the story of Susannah, which can be found in chapter 13 of the Book of Daniel from the Old Testament.

Susannah's story is one everyone should read at least once.

It is the story of a beautiful, wise and married young woman who has two lustful old men attempting to seduce her.

When she does not fall for their seduction, they threaten her, stating they will perjure testimony against her. If she refuses them, she will be sentenced to death for committing adultery.

Susannah did not falter. She was faithful to her marriage and morals.

When accused, she does not justify herself; she turns to God for justice.

Justice is served.

Susannah is set free.

The two men are put to death.

Susannah's faith is unwavering.

Her commitment to her spouse and God was unyielding.

Pray during Lent, during times of trial, that if we are questioned, accused or tempted we will have Susannah's faith, virtue and commitment to our spouses or loved ones, as well as to God.

Jody Balint, Waterdown.

Friday, March 10 Rahab Joshua 2:1-24; 6:17-25; Hebrews 11:31

Harlot! Why do you say harlot? Why did they? Why is that the first thing you think of when you hear my name?

I was a businesswoman, well-informed on current events and shrewd in the marketplace of ideas. I was insightful. I could see change coming. Perhaps you are, as well.

I was a family woman with a large extended family, and wasn't afraid to argue for them, stand up for them, negotiate for them. Perhaps you are, as well.

I was brave when times were dangerous.

I wasn't afraid to act on faith when action was needed. Perhaps you are, as well.

Judge me for who I was and what I did—

Part 1: Ash Wednesday (March 1) to March 31



Ruth in the fields of Boaz, by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Public domain.

A prayer for use during your Lenten devotions ...

PLEASE GOD, touch those who come by happenstance, those who come on purpose, and those who feel they are good Christians! Open our hearts anew to not only hear the Good News but to be so overcome with joy, that we teach and bring others into the household of God! —Amen. (from Suzanne Craven)

not with labels like hartot.

When you have done this, in study, prayer and meditation, perhaps you will be able to do the same for the women and the people around you, whatever labels they have been given ... perhaps even for yourself.

Amy Roebuck, Fort Erie.

Monday, March 13

Lost coin

Luke 15:8-10

This parable lies between two more famous ones—the lost sheep and the prodigal son.

All three end in a celebration and rejoicing.

One source suggests the tenth coin the woman was searching for would have been part of the jewelry given to her as a bride—so to lose one would have been shameful.

As a person who hates to lose anything I can feel for the woman's frantic search.

During Lent we are given 40 days to search for something more in our lives—perhaps for time, more meaningful prayer or concentrated bible reading. Or like the parable of the lost son, maybe there is a relationship in your life that needs to be mended.

I hope you find time to sweep off the cobwebs and shine a light on the part of your life needing to be enhanced spiritually. Then at Easter, when the bells ring and the celebrations start, let us rejoice as the piece in our lives that was missing has been found.

Alleluia!

Sue Carson, Dundas.

Tuesday, March 14

Elizabeth

Luke 1

I chose Elizabeth because she is special to me.

I was born on the Feast of the Birth of St. John the Baptist, and both my First and Life Professed were on the Feast of the Visitation.

Luke recounts the conception and birth of both John and Jesus. Their lives and the lives of their mothers are intertwined forever.

Elizabeth was a very strong woman. She had to be!

As the angel foretold John's birth, Zechariah doubted and was struck deaf and mute (couldn't hear or speak). Elizabeth was advanced in years and pregnant, not a socially comfortable situation to be in.

The angel told her cousin Mary about Elizabeth's "interesting condition." Mary was in the same condition but at the other end of her reproductive life. The angel tells Mary nothing is impossible with God.

Mary goes to Elizabeth for support.

When John is born, Elizabeth names him, but that's not enough. Zechariah must. When his father names him John, Zechariah's speech and hearing are restored.

It was Elizabeth's strength that made it possible.

Sister Margaret Hayward, Oakville.

Wednesday, March 15

Ruth

Book of Ruth

Ruth inspires us to seek a life of undying faith, compassion, determination and unconditional love.

Regardless of the odds stacked against her, including the death of a loved one, she took a huge leap of faith by choosing to follow Naomi to an unknown land, instead of the comfortable choice of returning to her people.

She professed her undying commitment to Naomi, "where you go I will go ... your people shall be my people and your God my God" (1:16).

Are we willing to surrender our complete will to God for his Holy Spirit to guide us instead of depending on our well-laid plans? How do we react when faced with tragedy and a sense of wasted years?

Ruth shows us that it is never too late to start over, even in a strange land.

Her selfless act of grace to comfort a

distraught and heartbroken Naomi has made Ruth a beacon of hope, humility, sacrifice and true discipleship.

As Ruth's light shone among all, let us follow her example by extending grace to others.

Grace Gomashie, London.

Thursday, March 16

Naomi

Book of Ruth

During a famine Naomi, an Israelite woman, was forced to leave her country—crossing the Jordan River into the foreign land of the Moabites—with her husband and two young sons, who eventually married Moabite women.

When all three men died, Naomi agreed to allow her loving Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth to return with her and live in Israel.

(According to Deuteronomic tradition, marriage to a Moabite woman was forbidden in Israel, but this law was not enforced until post-exilic times under Ezra and Nehemiah).

The courageous Naomi returned to Bethlehem and managed to have Ruth the Moabite married to Naomi's brother-in-law, and they had a son Obed.

Naomi's grandson, Obed, brought her great joy. He fathered Jesse, who to the reader's shock, fathered David who became Israel's most celebrated king, David.

What was surprising about the words of the Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth?

What was courageous and faithful about the actions of Naomi?

How did Naomi, as John Spong so well expresses the faithful life, "live fully, love wastefully and be all that you can be"?

Heather-Joy Brinkman, Hamilton.

Friday, March 17

Hagar

Genesis 16:1-15, 21:9-21

Not trusting God and taking matters into our own hands is something to which we all relate. I can.

It is through that process we learn about Hagar.

God promised Sarah and Abraham a son. Rather than trust God Sarah,

being past child bearing years, took matters into her own hands.

Hagar, an Egyptian - one of Sarah's slaves - was given to Abraham to fulfill God's promise. Their first son, Ishmael, was born. Then havoc broke loose.

Hagar and Ishmael were banished from the tribe.

However, God did not leave Hagar. He heard her cry. When she searched for water in the desert God provided the well.

Hagar lived with Ishmael as a free woman.

I find it interesting that a Hebrew woman had an Egyptian slave when only a few years earlier it was the Egyptians who enslaved the Hebrews.

From Hagar we learn we are all God's children, God hears our cry and we need not be ashamed of who or what we are. Most importantly, we are truly loved.

Angela Rush, Burlington.

Monday, March 20

Dorcas

Acts 9:36-42

In high school, classmates wanted to know my middle name. I would say, "It's in the Bible" or "It's Greek for Tabitha." Truth is, I was embarrassed as it often led to snickering and name calling. I was determined, once 18, I would legally change my name to Tabitha.

That would have broken my father's heart because I was named after his mother, who died when he was quite young. I did not change my name.

I know Dorcas's story by heart. When I tell it, I picture her mending worn clothes and teaching others. I see delight in her eyes whenever she saw someone wearing a garment she made.

I think the Dorcas of scripture was reflected in the person my grandmother would have been—caring, generous, patient and never idle. She lives on in my father; he shares those characteristics. I am grateful for my name, for the women who carried it before me.

While I am not gifted in sewing, I pray I may live up to my namesake in acts of compassion, generosity and love.

Susan Wilson, Erin.

Tuesday, March 21

Hannah

1 Samuel chapters 1-3

I was once told that if a woman's name was mentioned in the Bible, take notice. Hannah is definitely someone of whom to take notice.

Hannah was a second wife to Elkanah, but was childless.

She went to the temple to pray to the Lord to give her a son, and in return she would give him back to the Lord for her son's entire life. While she was praying, a priest named Eli mistakenly thought she was drunk. After explaining, they prayed together and when she returned home, she conceived and gave birth to her son, Samuel.

When Samuel was about three Hannah returned to the temple, and as promised, handed her only son over to the Lord.

Eli prayed that Hannah would have more children, and she gave birth to three more sons and two daughters.

I think many of us have promised something in return for an answered prayer, but how many of us have followed through, especially to this magnitude?

We all could be a bit more like Hannah.

Sandra Thomson, St. Catharines.

Wednesday, March 22

Rhoda

Acts 12:11-16

Peter was imprisoned. The faithful gathered under the cover of darkness to pray for his release.

Suddenly, a banging on the door. A servant girl, Rhoda, responded cautiously. Who would come to the house at this hour? "It's me."

"Peter!"

It was Peter's voice. Their prayers had been answered.

Joy took over. Bursting into the prayer room, she exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" "You're out of your mind," they retorted. Rhoda was of lower status than everyone else in the room. Because of her age, gender and social standing, she had no right to contradict anyone.

But she knew the truth. She argued until they opened the door.

In walked Peter and everyone was astonished.

I wonder if anyone apologized to Rhoda

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Women of the Bible

A daily Lenten devotion intended for individuals, couples and groups.



or admired her strength.

There will be times in our lives when we will be seen as the lowliest person in the room. Our knowledge will be questioned and others will try to silence us. But with God's strength, we can stand on the truth: God is faithful, prayers are answered and miracles still happen.

Allison Lynn Flemming, St. Catharines.

Thursday, March 23
The Widow of Zarephath
1 Kings 17:7-24

The Widow of Zarephath was in despair.

There was famine in the land. She and her son were starving, on the verge of death. A strange man approached her, asking for water and food. Despite her dire circumstances, she offered hospitality to this foreigner. She shared all her remaining food and invited him into her household.

She did not know that God had chosen her to provide for Elijah, yet she recognized God in him: "As the Lord your God lives." She trusted Elijah's words.

By her act of hospitality and sharing, she and her son were saved.

Her faith was tested when her son became ill and died.

Elijah pleaded with God, and her son was restored to life. She acknowledged God's work in this miraculous act.

Jesus recalls this widow's story in the first sermon of his ministry (Luke 4:25-26).

Her example of trust and hospitality can guide us when we face times of despair or have opportunities to share with those in need.

Unexpected blessings can spring from such faith and generosity.

Betty Chandler, Hornby.

Friday, March 24
The Samaritan woman
John 4:1-42

This woman made many mistakes—too many husbands—so she collected water at midday to avoid public confrontation.

Jesus surprisingly talked with her even though she was:

- A Samaritan, despised by Jews and deemed unclean
- A woman, to whom men were prohibited to talk in public
- A stranger.

What is wonderful to me is that this was the longest conversation Jesus had with anyone in the Bible!

Jesus asked for a drink—another shocking

development, since "Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans."

Jesus still reached out with words of compassion and challenge, pointing to the living waters of a life lived in relationship with God.

The magnitude of knowing Jesus was the Messiah moved her so profoundly she left her water vessel behind to pronounce this message to the village. She brought many people to faith.

In Lent, we are offered the living waters of Christ.

This passage reminds me that humanity creates the barriers and Jesus casts them down.

It offers me, as a woman, a glimpse into the feminine face of God.

Susan Bird, Hamilton.

Monday, March 27
Sarah (Sarai)
Genesis Ch. 12, 17, 18, 23

Sarah, Abraham's wife, was known for her beauty and faith.

We meet Sarah (princess) when her father-in-law Terah and family left their home in Ur of the Chaldeans to travel to Haran.

She was childless.

After Abraham's encounter with God, she moved from Haran—with her husband's family—to an unknown land, Canaan.

There, Abraham received God's promise that his descendants would inherit the land (12:7).

When Abraham was 100 and Sarai 90, God changed Sarai's name to Sarah, blessed her and called her a mother of nations.

God confirmed Sarah would have a son (17:16).

At this news Abraham fell on his face and laughed. Sarah also laughed that in her old age she would have "pleasure" (18:12).

They named him Isaac (child of promise), meaning "(God) is laughing (now)"

At age 127, Sarah died and was buried in a cave in Canaan (23:1, 19).

Sarah is named with heroes of the faith (Hebrews 11:11), and as an example of a holy woman (1 Peter 3).

She had become the mother of a multitude.

Shirley Kitchen, Milton.

Tuesday, March 28
Mary Magdalene
Matthew 27:57-61

To me, one of Jesus' foremost converts was Mary Magdalene.

No other disciple is mentioned more by name than she.

Mary followed Jesus right up to and after

his crucifixion.

The town of Magdala, from where she came, was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

She is never referred to as the wife or mother of anyone, indicating perhaps she was neither. As well, she was in control of her own property and had resources.

We do not actually read in the gospels where she met Jesus, but two mention that she had demons cast out of her, presumably by Jesus.

She is often depicted as a prostitute, but there is no evidence in the Bible to confirm this.

She showed a great devotion to Jesus. She supported him at his crucifixion and she was the first to see him after the resurrection. All four gospels describe her taking spices to his tomb.

To me this makes Mary Magdalene the paramount of Jesus' apostles.

Sue Crawford, Hamilton.

Wednesday, March 29
Esther
Book of Esther

Every great story has a tag line and this one jumps right out of another well-known story: "Who is the fairest of them all?"

During the Jewish Diaspora in Persia, after an extensive search King Ahasuerus chooses Esther because she is the most beautiful girl in his empire.

An interesting turn of events ensues—she is Jewish, one who was not ever to be chosen, destined or cherished, but one to be ignored at best, despised or even exterminated.

Yet, King Ahasuerus grows to love her for whom she is, although he doesn't know her birthright.

At the time of the plotted extinction of the Jews, Queen Esther reveals who she really is for the sake of her people, and is loved and respected by all, especially King Ahasuerus and the King of Heaven.

Who is fairest?

Esther, for her courage and her belief in God.

The story of Queen Esther is a wonderful diaspora story and the basis for the annual Jewish festival of Purim.

Janice Maloney-Brooks, Hamilton.

Thursday, March 30
The Bleeding Woman
Mark 5:25-34

The Bible isn't shy about delicate details.

This woman is sick, poor and desperate.

Flipping to Leviticus (15:25-30) we learn bleeding was considered unclean. In addition to health concerns, she is required to live her life separate from other people. She suffers for 12 long years.

One day she encounters Jesus and her life is completely changed.

After she touches his cloak and is healed, Jesus could keep on going. Crowds are pressing around, hustling him to his next appointment. He stops, turns around and seeks her out. When she finally confesses what she did, Jesus doesn't remind her of strict Levitical laws; instead he calls her "Daughter".

This is the God we follow.

A God who wants us to look at him, know him, get close to him. To see and be seen.

To know and be known. In doing so, we too have our lives transformed.

This is why this woman's story is so compelling.

In a few short lines we may know a lot about her, but we know even more about God.

Jennifer Stevens, Oakville.

Friday, March 31
Abigail
1 Samuel 25

Taking responsibility and humbling ourselves is often seen as weakness. Abigail, described as one of the four most beautiful women ever, was wise, upright and righteous.

Her very wealthy husband, Nabal, disrespected and insulted David, who in a state of fury strapped on his sword, took

400 warriors and set out to kill Nabal and the men in his household.

Abigail had nothing to do with insulting David or refusing him food, yet she knelt before him and took all the blame herself. It takes a strong person to forget oneself and think only of the best for others.

She did not protect herself but made herself vulnerable. Choosing her words wisely she appealed to the best in David, diffusing his anger and saving him from committing a massacre.

During Lent we think of Christ's willingness to do the same.

He humbled himself and took the blame for all mankind, offering no defence, facing mighty opposition, and thinking only of us.

That does not sound like weakness, but courage.

We need more courage.

Carol Summers, Cayuga.

Thank you to Mary Anne Grant and her team of commentators.

PART TWO: Monday, April 3 to Easter, will appear next month.

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Association keeps on giving

HOLLIS HISCOCK

Seven church and community groups have received donations from the Anglican Business and Professional Women's Association of Hamilton several years after it formally ended operating.

The seven beneficiaries

received varying grants ranging from \$4,500 to \$11,300, totalling \$45,200. Included were individual donations to four dioceses - the Arctic, Keewatin (part of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamckoweesh), Niagara and Moosonee. Christ's Church Cathedral, St. Matthew's House and Seafarers, all in Hamilton,

also benefited from the recent gifts.

"The donations are made up of funds we had banked, but mostly memorial donations that have literally taken years to clear," explained Mavis Adams.

Over its 69 year history the Association contributed \$268,000 to support the church in its mis-

sion of helping to enhance the lives of people.

Reflecting on what was accomplished, Mavis concluded, "This pleases me greatly. I have to admit I am quite proud of us."

Mavis Adams was a member of the Anglican Business and Professional Women's Association of Hamilton for

35 years and served in many capacities, including Secretary and President.

You can read the Association's story in the September 2010 and Summer 2015 issues of the *Niagara Anglican*.

The toy drive—parish continues association's outreach to the north

SHEILA VAN ZANDWYK

For nearly 40 years the Anglican Business and Professional Women's Association (ABPW) of Hamilton had a relationship with Moosonee Diocese, sending a bale of toys to them every Christmas. This started through an address given to the ABPW by then Bishop Neville Clark in the early 70s.

The Association learned of the many struggles this northern diocese dealt with as they ministered to their parishes and communities. Stirred into action, the group immediately gave a bursary to the Bishop, to be used at his discretion.

The annual toy drive was the next project undertaken.

In 2015 the ABPW decided their group had run its course after 69 years and much fun, fellowship and outreach.

The members were sorry that the toy drive for Moosonee



Young people at the LivingRoom—a drop-in ministry in the community of Schumacher, just outside of Timmins—sort toys sent to Moosonee Diocese from St. Michael's and St. Gabriel's in Hamilton.

Photo: Sheila Van Zandwyk

would no longer happen. As I was their Chaplain, I suggested perhaps my Parish of St. Michael's and St. Gabriel's would be interested in continuing this wonderful outreach, so I promised to present the idea to my Outreach Committee.

St. Michael's had a relationship with ABPW for many years,

as the Reverend David Luxton was Chaplain from 1962-68 while he was Rector of St. Michael's, I became Chaplain in 2012 and a number of our parishioners have been long time members of the Association.

So this past Christmas the Outreach Committee asked our parish to help with the toy drive

for Moosonee, and the response was overwhelming! We sent a pallet (4 feet by 4 feet and 6 feet high) full of toys, as well as a cheque for over \$1,200 for them to buy gift cards and food vouchers as needed.

The Venerable Deborah Loneragan-Freake, Archdeacon of Moosonee, was our contact person. She suggested the toys could be sent to The LivingRoom—a drop-in ministry in the community of Schumacher, just outside of Timmins.

The LivingRoom—a new ministry initiative—is already being well-used by children in an after school program, young mothers and seniors looking to make some connections, and teens who come to a drop-in session in the evening.

The toys were an overwhelming surprise for the children who were hoping for a bit of a pizza party the week before

Christmas, and instead walked in to see tables filled with toys for them to choose from. The money provided gift cards for the teens and supplied some nutritious snacks for the after-school program.

In a wonderful letter, the Archdeacon spoke of the many challenges of ministry in the north, including the long distances which priests travel and the economic struggles of life.

At St. Michael's and St. Gabriel's, we were so pleased to have been part of this long-standing wonderful outreach initiative by the Anglican Business and Professional Women's Association of Hamilton, and to begin this relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ in Moosonee Diocese.

The Reverend Sheila Van Zandwyk is Rector of St. Michael's Hamilton.

Reaching out – welcoming diversity

JOE ASSELIN

The neighbourhood immediately surrounding St. Cuthbert's in South East Oakville has been seeing an influx of new neighbours, many of them Mandarin-speaking from mainland China.

The parish has been blessed with some of these people becoming members—including a 17-year-old coming to church on his own—and several others visiting or making inquiries.

As a way of responding to this wonderful new opportunity God has been providing the parish, Mandarin lettering is displayed on the church sign board.

With two new Persian families from Iran, plans are also under-



way to incorporate Farsi words for welcome to be included as well.

These small but significant steps are one way St. Cuthbert's has been communicating God's welcome to their neighbours while celebrating their growing diversity.

The Reverend Canon Joseph Asselin is Rector of St. Cuthbert's Oakville.

140th anniversary started in style

Parishioners Neil Groombridge and Glenda Rookwood, like other parishioners of the Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer Stoney Creek, came to a special re-dedication Sunday service on January 15th dressed as worshippers from 1877.

In addition, photos and articles from the parish's history were displayed throughout the hall and chapel for people to enjoy and remember years gone by, wrote Churchwarden Bev Groombridge.

Many other events are in the works to mark the parish's 140th milestone. Check the parish website or contact the church office or the January 2017 *Niagara Anglican* for more.

Photo: Bev Groombridge



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Foundation helps heat historic church

JUDY ROIS

If you're walking or driving through the downtown area of Guelph, ON, one of the historic landmarks that stands out is St. George's Church in St. George's Square.

Founded in 1832, it is one of Guelph's oldest churches, and many of its founders were also the original builders of the city. Known as The Royal City, Guelph is consistently rated as one of Canada's best places to live.

Guelph was founded on St. George's Day (April 23) 1827, the feast day of the patron saint of England to honour Britain's Royal Family, the Hanoverians, who were descendants of the Guelphs—the ancestral family of George IV—hence the nickname, The Royal City.

Sir John Galt set aside land for a church which was completed in 1834 as a wood structure, and renovated to stone in the 1850s. The church you now see in St. George's Square was completed in 1873.

It comes as no surprise to anyone that capital improvements are at the top of the list to maintain the church and invest in its future.

An old heating system that ran with huge inefficiencies, a boiler on the brink of failure and plumbing no longer up to code were just a few of the priorities established by the leadership of St. George's.

An ambitious, but much needed plan totalling approximately \$1,200,000 was outlined for Ministry Resources Needs and Capital Resource Needs.

When the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) received an application request of \$10,000 to help replace the heating distribution system, one-half of the estimated \$1,200,000 had already been raised.

AFC was pleased to award a grant of \$10,000 towards this project.

An infrastructure project such as this one is essential for the preservation of an Anglican presence in the city.

Investment in the physical plant of St. George's allows more usage by the community as well as church members.

The Reverend Canon Judy Rois is Executive Director of the Anglican Foundation of Canada, Toronto.

jrois@anglicanfoundation.org



The old boiler, installed in 1982, as an oil fired unit and converted to gas in 1995, was replaced as part of St. George's mammoth renovations last year.

Photo: St. George's Guelph

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In conversation ...

... about Anglicans For Decriminalization with Maurice Tomlinson



Lawyer and activist Maurice Tomlinson is the Co-ordinator of Anglicans for Decriminalization and is a parishioner at St. Jude's Oakville. The Niagara Anglican interviewed Maurice to hear more about AfD and its work.

Niagara Anglican: What is Anglicans for Decriminalization?

Maurice: Anglicans for Decriminalization (AfD) is a group of Anglicans from across the Global Anglican Communion (GAC) which supports the decriminalization of private, consensual, adult same-gender intimacy.

NA: Why and how did it come into existence?

Maurice: AfD was formed after the Primates of the GAC issued the first-ever unequivocal call for decriminalization on January 15, 2016.

However, this revolutionary message was overshadowed by other events in the Communion, such as debates about same-gen-

der marriages and the ordination of gay clergy/bishops.

Members of AfD, therefore, hope to first remind our more than 80 million GAC members that the lives of same-gender loving people across the world continue to be destroyed by British colonially imposed anti-sodomy laws, which initially reflected the teachings of the Church of England. Armed with this information we expect that right-thinking Anglicans will petition governments to repeal these laws.

NA: Briefly describe what is happening around the world.

Maurice: In 77 countries across the world there are laws that criminalize same-gender intimacy, even in the privacy of the bedroom. In 11 countries the penalty is death, while in others, it's imprisonment (in some cases for life).

In my country of Jamaica, although the punishment is "only" 10 years in prison at hard labour, the law was recently updated in 2011 to require all

persons convicted under the anti-sodomy law to also be registered as a sex offender. This law and the homophobia that it supports have been recognized by UNAIDS and other agencies as a major reason why Jamaica has the highest HIV prevalence rate among men who have sex with men (MSM) in the western hemisphere, if not the world (33%).

NA: What happened a year ago when the Anglican Primates met?

Maurice: After a very contentious meeting at Lambeth last January, where consequences were issued to the Episcopal Church for celebrating same-sex marriage, the Primates for the first time made the unequivocal declaration that criminalizing same-gender intimacy was wrong.

NA: What has been your own involvement and how have others reacted?

Maurice: I am the coordinator

of AfD, so I handle the group's administrative matters.

More importantly, I have been contacting Anglican bishops, clergy and laity from across the GAC to inform them about AfD, requesting that they support the petition calling on governments to repeal the anti-gay laws, and meeting with leaders of GAC to ask them to publicly and at every available opportunity support decriminalization.

Our voice of reason can make a significant difference in the cause of decriminalization.

We have had overwhelmingly positive response from all across the Communion, including support from the bishops of Kingston in Jamaica, Guyana, Accra in Ghana, the Upper Shire in Malawi, the Primate of Scotland and the Archbishop of York. Our own bishop Michael and many Canadian bishops and clergy have endorsed our petition. Even some Canadian bishops and clergy, who are still opposed to the recent decision by our General Synod on marriage equality, have supported decriminalization. Clearly, decriminalization is one thing that the vast majority of the GAC can agree on.

NA: What can our readers do or where can they get more information?

Maurice: Readers can read, sign and share the online petition (<https://www.change.org/p/governments-anglicans-for-decriminalization-of-private-consensual-same-gender-intimacy>) to be presented to governments around the world that have anti-gay laws.

Interested persons can also contact us at AnglicansForDecriminalization@outlook.com

Upon request, we can visit parishes and explain to congregants why this life-saving work is so important.

Finally, readers can donate to AfD so that we can attend scheduled meetings at the Anglican Communion Office and increase our outreach to more provinces and governments, especially those with anti-gay laws. St. Matthias Bellwoods in Toronto will issue tax receipts for any cash or cheque donations towards AfD.

NA: Thank you and blessings on AfD work and mission.



◀ The Reverend Tom Decker, Matthew Bowman-Naseer, Bishop Michael, Canon Robert Fead and Maurice Tomlinson show solidarity for the LGBTI community in Jamaica.

Photo: Submitted

Deadlines and Submissions for Niagara Anglican

Deadlines:

- May – March 25
- Summer – April 25
- September – July 25

Submissions:

- News, Letters, Reviews** (*books, films, music, theatre*) – 400 words or less
- Articles** – 600 words or less

Original cartoons or art – Contact the Editor.

Photos – very large, high resolution, action pictures (people doing something).

Include name of photographer. Written permission of parent/guardian must be obtained if photo includes a child.

All submissions must include writer's full name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit or refuse submissions.

Questions or information:

Contact the Editor at editor@niagaraanglican.ca or 905-635-9463.

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Through a Canadian stained glass window

Woman's Auxiliary Founder, Roberta Elizabeth Odell Tilton



ABBY MULVIHILL

Roberta Elizabeth Odell Tilton was born in 1837 and died in 1925.

She was born into a world in which women did not have the vote and were not legally persons.

Women could not have a bank account, and men ran the churches.

Although a Unitarian by birth, Roberta became an evangelical Anglican when she married John Tilton, who became a high ranking federal civil servant in Ottawa.

She had a certain social position in Ottawa, and used this as a stepping stone to the advancement of women's roles in Canada as a whole.

In 1885 she co-founded the Woman's Auxiliary (W.A.)—much later this became the Anglian Church Women—with the permission of (most of) the bishops of the Canadian Anglican Church. The W.A. was envisioned as a support for the Board of Foreign and Domestic Missions.

By the time of her death, the W.A. had 70,000 members and 3,000 branches.

Roberta worked in other spheres than just the W.A.

She was involved with the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Girls' Friendly Society, the Mothers' Union, the Orphans' Home of the City of Ottawa, as well as many other causes.

Personally, there was sadness in her life. Her one adopted child did not live long.

The Church of the Ascension in Hamilton does not have the only Canadian stained glass window commemorating her life.

St. Mary's Kerrisdale Vancouver, B.C. also has an effort in her memory. Gilroy Stained Glass (Vancouver) apologizes for the look of this window: "The only image we had is a photo of her looking very stern and by her body language slightly peeved with the photographer."

Abby Mulvihill, one of the newer members of the Church of the Ascension Hamilton, has been involved with the Fundraising Group and the Sunday School, as well as sharing the responsibility of being a projectionist at Sunday services.

As we celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, we look back at the role of the church as told through stained glass windows.

The Church of the Ascension Hamilton has 10 stained glass windows in their Chapel of the Holy Spirit dedicated to Canadian Anglican pioneers. For more information about the windows go to www.ascensionchurch.ca.

The *Niagara Anglican* will feature others in the coming months.

◀ The window's inscription reads: In 1885 Roberta E. Tilton started the Woman's Auxiliary, a notable concept that developed and rendered such splendid service to the Anglican Church of Canada.

New logo for Niagara Anglican

HOLLIS HISCOCK

At a recent meeting, the Niagara Anglican Publication Board accepted a new logo, probably the first distinctive design for the diocesan paper in its 62 year history.

Like beauty, any explanation of a logo may be in the eye of the beholder, yet I am venturing into uncharted waters to provide my interpretation. No doubt you may perceive it differently, and I look forward to hearing what you glean from reflecting on our new insignia.

The outer circle incorporates everything inside as God encompasses humanity, nature and universal totality. It speaks of universality, wholeness, eternity and sacredness.

The white circle, separating the two green spheres, can be interpreted as the demarcation line between humanity and divinity.

The inside circle with NA (Niagara Anglican) reminds us that as a diocesan paper we are "a gathering place and sound-



ing board for the people of the Diocese of Niagara" and we invite others to participate digitally, as well as through print.

The colour white symbolizes goodness, light, heaven, understanding, faith, beginning, goodness and other visions we strive to achieve in our relationships with each other, nature and God.

The colour green reminds us of our constant need to grow, be renewed, live in harmony, care for the environment, be respectful and practice other behaviours leading to the well-being of all.

Well, that is what I see when I look at our new logo. What do you see?

If none of the above resonates with you, I hope you like it anyway.

Spend a year in God's rhythm an invitation

Dear Friends of SSJD,

I want to let you know about a great opportunity for young women in their 20s and 30s who have a passion for the gospel, who want to serve others, who seek ways to deepen their lives as followers of Jesus and who would like an experience of intentional community.

The Sisters of St. John the Divine have opened applications for the 2017-2018 cohorts of our program called Companions on an Ancient Path. We are now about four months into the first year of the program, and we are excited and privileged to have five young women from across Canada and from various denominational backgrounds living with us this year.

Here are a few highlights of Companions on an Ancient Path.

It is a **FREE** opportunity for women to spend a year building community among themselves, learning from a healthy traditional community and developing spiritual disciplines that they can take out into their future lives.

The program is supported by SSJD and by a generous grant from the Anglican Diocese of Toronto.

It would appeal especially to those who would like to take a gap year in their studies, a year off between studies and work or a leave of absence from their work.

The program is offered in partnership with Wycliffe College, where Companions will have the opportunity to take courses in spiritual formation that may transfer back to their home institutions.



Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas (Reverend Mother) with the Companions at their Commissioning last year. Photo: SSJD

We need your help to make the program more widely known, and I hope you will share this information with any young women you know who might benefit from such an opportunity.

For links to materials about the program, which could be printed and posted on your church bulletin boards, go to ssjd.ca or ssjdcompanions.org or contact me at cj@ssjd.ca

If you are interested or know someone who is, contact me at cj@ssjd.ca or phone me at 416-226-2201 ext. 316.

Your Sister in Christ,

The Reverend Sister Constance Joanna Gefvert, Companions Coordinator.